DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 152 CS 501 849

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TITLE The President's Message on Public Broadcasting.
INSTITUTION Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 17 Oct 77
NOTE 5p.; Special report of the "CPB Report," Vol. 8, No. 22, October 17, 1977

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Broadcast Industry; *Federal Legislation; Financial Policy; *Financial Support; *Government Role; Programing (Broadcast); *Public Television; *Radio
IDENTIFIERS Presidential Messages; *Public Broadcasting

ABSTRACT

This report provides the text of President Jimmy Carter's message to the Congress of the United States on public broadcasting. The major portion of the speech is devoted to an argument for and description of a bill that continues and increases long-term federal funding for public television and radio. Specific proposals assure long-range funding, clarify the functions of national entities, increase funds allocated for national programming, reduce the percentage of funds that public broadcasters must raise to match Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) funds, transfer public communications facilities from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to CPB, and encourage journalistic independence. In addition, the requirement of public accountability, the increased participation of minorities and women, the study of federal agency program-funding, and the study of public-station frequency allocations and reception are urged. (KS)

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Vol. VIII, No. 22
October 17, 1977

Special Report

cpbreport

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ON PUBLIC BROADCASTING

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am transmitting to the Congress today proposals to strengthen our public broadcasting system and to insulate it from political manipulation.

The impact of television and radio on our lives can scarcely be overestimated. Television now bulks larger than all its rivals for our leisure time. In the daily routine of many individuals, it consumes more hours than family, school, church, or job. Radio is just as important; with some 400 million receivers in American homes, cars, and workplaces, radio listening is nearly as pervasive as the air that carries it.

In these circumstances, a strong and varied public broadcast system has a crucial role to play. Because it is free of the scramble for ratings, public broadcasting has room for experimentation and risk-taking. Public broadcasting is for all Americans. It can meet the needs of audiences that number in the millions but are seldom served anywhere else. That is why, during my campaign for the Presidency, I pledged my best efforts to strengthen it.

The bill I am submitting with this message continues and increases long-term Federal funding for public television and radio. Financial stability is needed if public broadcasting is to provide better programs for more citizens and protect those programs from political pressures.

The bill also makes statutory changes to increase cooperation, reduce overlap, and clarify the missions of the three primary national organizations in the field—the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and National Public Radio (NPR).

These changes will also increase public broadcasting's insulation from inappropriate political influence. Other amendments will give it greater journalistic independence. I want to encourage public broadcasters at all levels to engage in active news reporting and public affairs programming. This

Administration will not try to stifle controversy on public television and radio. No President should try to dictate what issues public broadcasting should cover or how it should cover them. And this legislation will make such an attempt more unlikely.

This bill also proposes amendments that require public broadcasting to:

- Devote more resources to high-quality national programming.
- Set long-range goals by which its progress can be judged.
- Plan how public television and radio signals can be brought within reach of all citizens.
- Provide greater accountability to the public.
- Stimulate greater participation by minorities and women.

Without these statutory changes, not even a long-term authorization bill would insure diverse and high-quality programming.

Public broadcasting's organizational problems and its need for better planning and greater diversity should not blind us to its accomplishments. In the ten years since the Public Broadcasting Act first provided Federal funds for programming, public broadcasting has set new standards in children's programs, drama, music, science, history, and educational services. Its coverage of local, state, and national hearings, its documentaries, and its in-depth news analyses have helped make government more understandable.

Public broadcasting has done more than simply entertain us. It has encouraged us and our children to think and to act. It has also pioneered in such technical innovations as captioning for the deaf and satellite broadcasting.

This bill will renew Federal funding while improving the ways the money is spent. The money will be used, among other purposes, to:

- Strengthen the PBS national television service to provide a first-rate schedule of cultural and public affairs programs.
- Support and expand National Public Radio, which provides a lively alternative schedule that includes music, public hearings and events, news analysis, and original radio drama.
- Plan the best use of the public broadcasting satellite system and other new communications technologies. These advances make possible new television and radio networks devoted entirely to adult instruction, children's programming, or the special needs of

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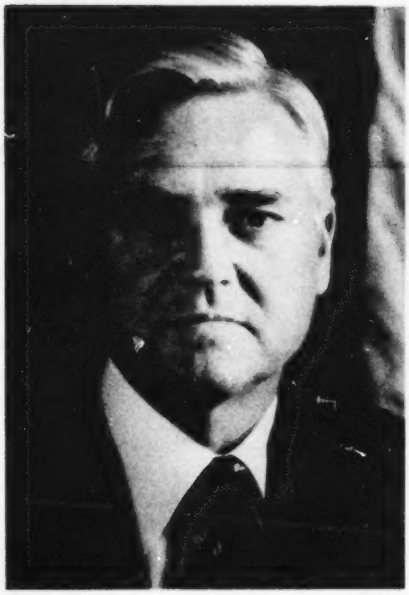
Hispanics, Blacks, women, the elderly, or other distinct audiences.

- Extend the reach of public television and radio signals. All taxpayers contribute to public broadcasting, but only about half receive a good public television signal, and fewer than two-thirds can receive public radio.
- Increase public broadcasting's contribution to in-school and adult instruction. Public television's most popular prime-time series have been widely used for college extension courses. Lifelong learning should remain one of its principal goals.



Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.), Chairman of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Communications

- Increase employment, training, and ownership opportunities for minorities and women.
- Support local, state, and regional programming. Programming of local interest is an important resource.

Except for the key area of national programming, this legislation does not mandate specific allocations of Federal funds for each of these purposes. It is desirable to allow CPB the flexibility to choose among competing priorities. But the bill does set a direction that allows all these efforts to be pursued.

My specific proposals are as follows:

Assure Long-Range Funding

Enactment of this legislation will allow continuation of the present system of five-year authorization and two-year advance appropriations, which was designed to assist planning and enhance insulation. Congress is currently considering an appropriation of $152 million for fiscal 1980, the last year of the current authorization. New legislation is needed early next year for public broadcasting to be included in next year's appropriations process.

The funds authorized in the enclosed bill total $1.041 billion. This includes a five-year authorization for CPB at $180 million for fiscal year 1981 and $200 million in each of the four succeeding years. It also includes a separate grant program of $30 million annually for technical facilities in fiscal 1979 and 1980, and $1 million for telecommunications demonstrations by HEW in fiscal 79. These figures represent recommended authorization levels. Appropriations requests must come from the annual budget review process.

This bill maintains an authorized level of Federal funding at $200 million after the second year. Such leveled funding will ensure that both we and the public broadcasting system will reexamine appropriate funding levels based on its needs and potential in 1979, after the new Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting delivers its report. This Commission has taken on the difficult job of looking at the public system's creative process in light of new technology. It is also examining both the existing sources of Federal and non-Federal funding and potential new ones. The Task Force that established the Commission has urged us and Congress to move forward with a long-term authorization and related structural issues so that it can concentrate on funding methods, technology, and programming.

Leveling the authorization also insures that in two years we and Congress will evaluate the success of the organizational and other changes proposed in this bill.

Clarify Functions Of National Entities

Since 1967, most Federal funds for public broadcasting have gone to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). CPB is an independent unit run by a 15-member Board appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. One of CPB's key missions is to distribute Federal funds for programming in ways that shield program content from political pressure. Another is to provide system-wide leadership in planning, budgeting, resource allocation, research, evaluation, fundraising from private sources and government agencies, and development of new communications services.

The public radio and television networks are run by two other units that represent the local stations: National Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). The stations decide what programs get on the air. There are also five regional television networks and several special program exchanges like the Latino Consortium. National production centers exist at larger stations and at independent entities like Children's Television Workshop. All these units have their own programming staffs.

At present, CPB itself often chooses which individual programs or series to fund. This:

- Reduces CPB's effectiveness as a political insulator.
- Reduces its ability to focus on long-range planning and new educational services.
- Duplicates staff, wastes money, and causes unproductive feuds between CPB and PBS, NPR, and other public broadcasting organizations.

The public cannot afford to pay duplicate organizations to do the same job. The greater the bureaucratic overhead, the smaller the sums that can be used for programming. It is time to define organizational roles clearly so that the public and program producers can understand how the system operates and there can be a rational, efficient basis for future planning.

I propose three steps to resolve this issue:

- CPB's role would be clarified to be that of a system overseer operating much like an endowment or foundation. Based on its planning process, it would make broad allocations among radio, TV, and other distribution systems and among children's, public affairs, minority, and other program types. It would implement these decisions by giving annual or multi-year bloc grants to PBS, NPR, regional and other specialized networks, and production centers. The grantees would select the specific programs to be produced.
- Two members chosen by PBS and two by NPR would be added to the CPB Board to increase both cooperation and insulation. (Four Presidentially appointed slots would be phased out to keep the total at 15.)
- CPB would be required to prepare a five-year development plan for public broadcasting in concert with PBS and NPR to guide the allocation of Federal resources and update it annually in its report to Congress.

This will decentralize creative decisions, place them further from any potential political control, and refocus CPB on the important job of overall system development. But, under this mode of operation, CPB should require only a limited full-time staff to assist its Board in its priority setting and oversight tasks. It can draw upon distinguished experts in the arts, science, journalism, and education to help it evaluate current and future needs. This does not eliminate, but makes more appropriate, CPB's critical role in programming.

CPB would not need a substantial staff for program decision-making and program-related legal, public information, audience research, and similar functions. These operational tasks can be done by PBS, NPR, and other grantees without adding persons to their staffs.

CPB would need substantially fewer than its current staff of 130 to carry out its missions. The savings from these cuts and greater efficiency in CPB's retained functions should go into programming.

Increase Funds Allocated For National Programming

There are now 271 public television stations

and 203 public radio stations. They provide a vital service to their states and communities. But each of these stations cannot separately produce the high quality cultural, public affairs, and instructional programming their communities need.

Federal support for strong national program services was a principal recommendation of the first Carnegie Commission. It was a primary aim of the 1967 Act that created CPB. But CPB now devotes only $17 million of its current $103 million appropriation directly to national programming. In addition, about $19 million of the $58 million CPB gives to local stations is pooled for that purpose.

More Federal funds should be concentrated on national programming. By devoting more funds to national needs, public broadcasting can give producers adequate lead time and budget to create high quality domestic productions. It can and should support more first-rate production centers, like Children's Television Workshop and similar centers for independent producers, minorities, educators, and women. It can provide the complete coverage of news events, such as important Congressional hearings, that commercial broadcasting rarely offers.

This bill provides that at least 25% of funds appropriated to CPB in future years shall be used for a National Programming Fund for bloc grants for such productions. This will insure that by FY 1982 up to $50 million, depending on the appropriation level, would be earmarked for national programming. These programs will continue to be produced on a decentralized basis, by producers throughout the country, but intended for national distribution.

In addition, I call on the public broadcasting system to devote another 25% of the Federal money to national programming. The stations can do this by pooling money, as the TV stations do now through the Station Program Cooperative, or it can be done by any other mechanism. This would provide a total of up to $100 million for national programming in FY 1982. Minorities, women, and independent as well as station producers should have access to these funds as well as those in CPB's National Programming Fund.

Local, state, and regional services also need substantial support. A significant aspect of that support has been the funds CPB passes through to local stations for their discretionary use for local or national purposes. Unlike the current law, my bill does not place either a ceiling or floor on those funds. Allocations for this purpose should be made from year to year, as determined through CPB's cooperative planning process with PBS, NPR, and the licensees.

I also call on the other funding sources—particularly the states—to hold up their end of this funding partnership. Currently, non-Federal sources such as state and local governments, individuals, foundations, and corporations still supply the vast bulk of funds for local public stations. But while Federal funds and individual contributions have increased during the past few years, state funds have levelled off.

As a former governor, I know the pressures on state budgets. But state support of public broadcasting, which brings state legislative proceedings and other vital services to citizens, should be maintained. I urge states that have contributed to do more, and those that have not, to begin.

Reduce The Percentage Public Broadcasting Must Raise To Match CPB Funds

The current law requires the system to raise $2.50 for every $1.00 the Federal Government gives CPB. CPB has indicated that such levels of non-Federal support cannot be achieved to match the proposed increased authorizations.

Even if states increase their share, there are realistic limits to the amounts that public broadcasting can hope to raise by on-air appeals to its audience and by corporate and foundation support. I am therefore proposing a reduction in the match to $2.25-to-$1.00. This figure assures a continued incentive for fundraising without asking the system to achieve the impossible. The minimum dollar amount of matching funds that could be required to meet the upper limit of appropriations under this bill would rise gradually until the authorization is levelled off.

CPB itself can also increase incentives for non-Federal funds. It might revise its formula for allocation of local community service grants to encourage such support. Individual citizens should recognize that their funds help maintain the diversity and independence of their local stations.

I intend to review the matching concept and formula in 1979 after assessing its impact on fundraising and the Carnegie Commission's report as to future funding sources and needs.

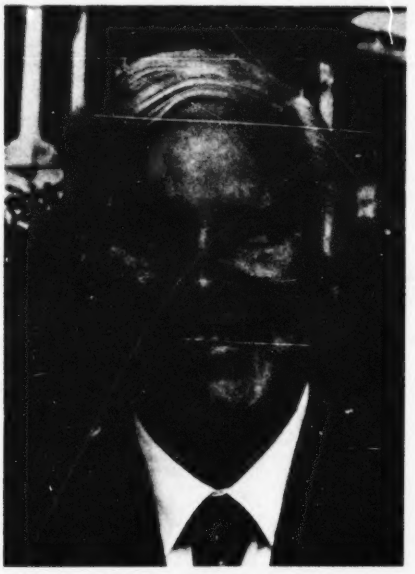
Transfer Public Communications Facilities Program From HEW To CPB

A key part of my plan is the effort to bring public broadcasting to as many people as possible. Much of the Federal funding for station facilities comes from the Educational Broadcast Facilities Program now run by HEW. That effort should be fully coordinated with the system's own long-range planning. I am therefore recommending that this program be transferred to CPB.

As a part of the planning required by this bill, CPB will estimate the cost of reaching as close to the total American population as would be feasible using the most efficient technologies. For the next two years, pending submission of such a plan, I propose to continue the Facilities Program's present $30 million annual authorization.

I also propose changes in the Facilities Program to:

- Make assistance to minority public television and radio stations a funding priority. No public television station in the continental United States is operated by a minority-controlled institution, although Howard University and others have applied for licenses. There are only a handful of minority-controlled public radio stations.
- Allow planning grants to be made to groups wishing to start stations. These grants would enable them to do the legal, engineering, and other studies needed to apply for actual communications facilities.



Rep. Harley O. Staggers (D-W. Va.), Chairman of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee.

- Make regional networks and other groups of stations eligible for facilities funds.
- Make facilities grants open to any broadcast or nonbroadcast communications technology chosen by an eligible applicant. Federal funds should support the most efficient technical means to make publicly funded programming available to the widest audiences.

CPB will be able to use a portion of the facilities funds being transferred for demonstrations of new public service delivery systems, such as two-way communication via satellite.

Encourage Journalistic Independence

Unlike commercial broadcasters, public broadcasters are forbidden by current law to editorialize on issues of public importance. This ban makes sense for stations licensed to a state or local government instrumentality. But Congress has recently amended the tax code to allow private non-profit organizations to advocate positions on public issues. The Public Broadcasting Act should be similarly amended to allow non-governmental licensees to exercise their First Amendment rights.

This change would not require editorials, but it would permit them. Public broadcasters should have an equal opportunity with commercial broadcasters to participate in the free marketplace of ideas.

States hold about half of the U.S. public television station licenses. Another step toward journalistic independence would be for state and local governments to better insulate these stations. The danger of undue political control is as real here as at the Federal level. This bill does not compel any particular form, but I want to encourage states to establish independent boards to assure insulation.

Require Public Accountability

Independence from government control does not mean a public station has no obligation to account for its stewardship. But such accountability is best exercised directly to the local citizens who contribute to the station's support. I therefore propose sunshine for public stations that receive Federal funds; they should be required to open their board meetings and financial records to the public.

This legislation is not intended to restrict a public station board's privacy on personnel matters, or otherwise sanction unwarranted invasions of personal privacy. But local citizens should have access to the basic decisions public stations make in allocating tax funds and private donations. This is already standard practice at CPB, PBS, NPR, and many public stations.

Increase Participation Of Minorities And Women

This bill makes it clear that the employment discrimination laws apply to stations and other producers that receive CPB funds. It conditions such grants on nondiscrimination, just like receipt of a grant from a Federal agency. Since CPB is not a Federal agency, enforcement of this requirement will be delegated to a Federal agency with expertise in this field.

This change, combined with making minority ownership a goal of the facilities program, will help bring greater diversity to the decision-making levels of public broadcasting. But statutory amendments alone are not enough. Public broadcasting should make its own effort to become an entry-level training ground and model for the other media in meeting the needs of women, Blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities.

Study Of Federal Agency Program Funding

Last year approximately $25 million was contributed to public broadcasting directly by four agencies—HEW, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Science Foundation.

This is an important source of Federal funds that is outside of the CPB appropriation. It accounts for one-fourth of the national public TV schedule, as well as many local and state productions. And it is not covered by CPB's insulation from political pressure.

This funding should be coordinated with the work of CPB, PBS, and NPR to assure that it is used efficiently for programs that get on the air. I propose that CPB inventory all such grants in its annual report to Congress and that it act as a consultant to the agencies and a clearinghouse for grant information. In addition, we are drafting administrative rules for the agencies to assure there is no improper manipulation of program content.

Public Station Frequency Allocations And Reception

Most public television stations are on UHF channels, and most public radio stations are on the FM band. I urge the Federal Communications Commission to seriously consider pending proposals that would bring public television and radio closer to parity with commercial stations. These include proposals for better standards for TV set reception of UHF channels and better allocation of FM channels for public radio. I am hopeful that the new leadership at the FCC will give UHF and FM improvements priority attention.

Better spectrum management and reception standards may do more to make public broadcasting more widely available than substantial Federal grants for transmitters and increased power. The costs and benefits of each approach should be carefully weighed.

. . . . . .

I urge Congress to consider promptly, and to pass, the legislation I am submitting containing the proposals described in this message. This will provide a firm foundation for planning the next decade of public communications in this country.

JIMMY CARTER

THE WHITE HOUSE,
October 6, 1977